



Dungeon Masters Guide

Gary Gygax , David C. Sutherland III (Illustrator) , D.A. Trampier (Illustrator) , Darlene Pekul (Illustrator) , Will McLean (Illustrator) , David S. La Force (Illustrator) , Erol Otus (Illustrator) , Mike Carr (Foreword)

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Whether you're running a single adventure or masterminding a complete campaign, the Dungeon Masters Guide is the absolute best source for information. There's no need to *guess* the rules. You'll learn spells, monsters, travel, magic lists and combat rules.

Dungeon Masters Guide Details

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From Reader Review Dungeon Masters Guide for online ebook

Elliot says

Oh yeah!!!

Ron says

Part of the 1st edition set. I have stuck with the 1st edition books when many people I have known have moved on to the 2nd, 3rd and even 4th set because of the basic premise set out in the 1st edition that stated, use every good idea that you have read and make it part of your world. After they lost their copyright lawsuit TSR changed it's tune and basically said that if it didn't come to you from them, you were no longer playing the game but something different.

“You are not entering this world in the usual manner, for you are setting forth to be a Dungeon Master. Certainly there are stout fighters, mighty magic-users, wily thieves, and courageous clerics who will make their mark in the magical lands of D&D adventure. You however, are above even the greatest of these, for as DM you are to become the Shaper of the Cosmos. It is you who will give form and content to the all the universe. You will breathe life into the stillness, giving meaning and purpose to all the actions which are to follow.”

? Gary Gygax

Matthew Iden says

It's difficult to explain the impact that D&D had on anyone growing up in the 70's and 80's.

There were no video games, no internet, and radio was the only way to find out about a new band. There was barely cable TV. The only places to expend and exercise an overactive imagination was by reading comics and paperback books (a great option, but not one that filled up 100% of your time...just 90%).

When D&D came along, it's like a hidden release-valve had suddenly been re-discovered and opened. Suddenly, imagination wasn't about a one-way, solo exercise in reading; it could be interactive and participatory.

The Dungeon Master's Guide wasn't the first book or manual to open that door. Purists will argue that the Blue Cover and Red Cover D&D editions and the pamphlets like *Blackmoor* and *Arms & Armour* deserve that credit. But if those precursors cracked open the door, the DM's Guide blew it wide open.

The book covers--in a bizarre manner that's simultaneously chaotic and strictly codified--a bewildering range of topics, from world-building to social constructs to the detailed attributes of individual magical items. Tables and charts quantify a mind-boggling number of effects, reactions, and events. Hints abound that many of the rules and items came from Gary Gygax's original D&D campaign, but the RPG rules were always generic enough to use anytime, anywhere.

There are parts of the book I didn't read for years, others I've re-read a hundred times, othes I glossed over

and was delighted to find much later (the fantasy reading list is a great guide to Golden Age gems).

I'll also take issue with another reviewer's dislike of the artwork; aside from the atrocious cover, the interior art is varied and wonderful. Hopefully that's not just my inner-thirteen year old speaking. :)

If you're an afficianado of RPG's, video games, or even fantasy in general, it's worth it to get your hands on a copy of the DM's Guide (or all of the 1st edition books, for that matter). This is where it all started.

David Wismer says

I was introduced to Dungeons and Dragons in University and have played every version from the original D&D to edition 4. It is not the version that makes the game but the DM and the players. My son and I still play once a month with a great group (AD&D 1st edition rules with some house rules thrown in).

Michael says

*Edit: Five years after writing this review, I've learned about the Old School Renaissance, and have begun a new 1st ed campaign of my own. On the whole, I still agree with myself about the DMG, but I will say that reading through it and having a strong familiarity with its contents does help with dungeon mastering. I also seem to have missed the various points in which Gygax decried "barrack-room lawyers" and emphasized the DM's primacy over any "official" rule or ruling. There are hidden gems in unexpected places, even though all of them are hidden among unnecessary details. *

It's funny going back and looking at this book now, as I realize how little of it I ever used, read, or even was aware of when I was a fantasy role-player. So far as I can judge, no one outside of Lake Geneva ever took all the rules in this book seriously, and you have to wonder why they even felt the need to publish a lot of it. And yet, this was the Holy Grail of roleplaying guides when I was a kid, and not just among my own age group. I suppose what it comes down to is that in a system like role playing, "less is more," and most referees will make their own judgment calls about what kind of a game they want to run.

The parts of the book I used the most were the combat tables (which were available on the much cheaper "DM's Screen") and the appendix at the back of the book listing experience point values for all the monsters (which could actually be figured out using a simple formula – something I didn't realize for years). I also made use of the magic item descriptions, the character creation rules and sometimes the wandering monster tables. I read (but never really used) the sample dungeon/adventure narrative, and the appendices on "Dungeon Dressing" and "Creating a Party on the Spur of the Moment." Those sections were good for solitary entertainment, if nothing else. Oh, and of course I spent a lot of time looking at the pictures.

But going through this book now, I find all kinds of stuff I never knew was there. The first is the very entertaining admonition by Gygax that "this book is the exclusive precinct of the DM [and] you must view any non-DM possessing it as something less than worthy of honorable death." One wonders what he was thinking. Apart from the fact that he was implying a desire to limit sales of one of his most popular products, it really calls into question his understanding of role-playing culture. Did he really think there was a clear line between "DM-players" and "non-DM players?" Didn't it occur to him that pretty much every player would want to Dungeon Master at some time (like actors who want to direct)? Did he imagine that DMs would be a separate class of players, who would never want to return to the lowly status of playing someone else's campaign? Personally, I played D&D most often as a player, not a DM, but it never occurred to me

that I had done something wrong by owning the DM's Guide.

Another thing that surprised me (and this may be part of the reason Gygax wanted to scare away the players) was the fine level of adjudication of the rules this book goes into. Rather than a clear set of rules, it often serves more as an FAQ responding to the issues players raised when they only had the Player's Manual to work from. This gets a bit ridiculous also. For example, the "spell explanations" give very little explanation – they mostly address situations that intrepid players have baffled Gygax with in the past. The "Wall of Stone" spell's explanation therefore covers what to do when players try to use the spell to build a bridge over a chasm. That's a bad idea in the first place, because once you let them do that, they're going to want to use it to make towers, fortresses and castles. I'd just have ruled that any such attempt would result in a wall that would collapse under its own weight, unless the gap was very small, and then I'd have made up a "Bridge" spell for magic users to learn at a higher level – but they were learning as they went in those days, and not all of the "rules" in this book were good ones.

There are also aspects of the Campaign that seem to assume that everyone will enjoy playing a very difficult, slow to progress campaign. Gygax's advice on the placement of treasure, while interesting in terms of the creative ways of handling treasure types, is stingy in the extreme. He maintains that this is necessary for "game balance," but judging from the many published modules that followed (to say nothing of later developments like Baldur's Gate), it seems like few people ever played as rigidly as he envisioned. Certainly he was correct in pointing out how quickly the "Monty Haul" dungeon would disappoint and cause people to lose interest (and we've all played one of those games), but he seems to have failed to understand that there are ways to develop challenges to meet all levels of play. Apart from which, it was an act of bizarre and almost maliciously poor judgment to include detailed descriptions of all those higher-level spells and powerful magic items and then expect us never to use them.

With all that said, of course, the whole concept of role-playing was in its infancy, and it would soon mature and result in better organized, more stream-lined rules systems. Nevertheless, even if we never treated it like the Holy Bible, this book inspired a generation of role players to create our own worlds, and gave us at least a few tools we could use (or misuse) in that creation. I still have fond feelings about AD&D and about the DMG in general, and I still get a kick from looking at the pictures.

Megan says

C'mon... who doesn't miss playing D&D all night? :) Besides the fact that I was young, had no mortgage or job worth keeping, blew my entire paycheck on weed & Taco Bell ~ this was a totally kick ass game to play! I'm just sorry I don't have more of these books lying around.

Lyn says

I think I can trace my current career as a lawyer back to playing D&D and being a dungeon master back in the 80s.

No kidding. In order to run a campaign, you have to read and research and know the dungeon, understand the rules, anticipate actions, have monsters lined up, know the armor classes and have savings throws established. By being prepared, you can better think on your feet.

I own a 1979 edition and it's a wealth of information. How to play the game, create characters, character

classes, races, alignments, and a lot of peripheral information. What is an oligarchy? You can find that out on page 89. A discussion about henchman is on page 34. Can you combine a D&D game with Gamma World? Yep, page 113.

Here is a list of famous and / or successful people who were once dungeon masters:

Vin Diesel (born Mark Sinclair)

Tim Duncan.

Mike Myers.

Stephen Colbert.

Kevin Smith.

Felicia Day.

Stephen King.

Wil Wheaton.

And while it is fun to be a player and roll the dice and experience an adventure and develop a character into a higher level while gaining greater experience, being the DM was what I think about most when I recall those good times.

Alessandra says

Although I loved playing this game (even with the embarrassingly awkward artwork all over it), I could never have figured it out without more experienced players to explain it to me, who were themselves tutored by other gamers and so on back to Gygax himself. It is so poorly written, so dense and counterintuitive, so badly organized, and so contradictory in places, that there is no way to figure out how to play it from the books themselves.

But man, it was fun.

My original copy of this with the goofy giant red devil on the front is long lost, but I got incredibly lucky at a jumble sale a few years ago and found another one.

And yes, I was a girl roleplaying gamer back in the Palaeolithic era, mkay?

David Sarkies says

Got to love the cartoons in this book

1 January 2013

This book gets a high rating purely for nostalgic purposes. Okay it was not the first rulebook that I ever owned, but it was certainly the most used, which sometimes puzzled me because, theoretically, you could get away with running a game without actually having this book, though having this book does make things a lot easier. Look, I'm not sure if I still have mine, but I do remember it fondly, especially the section of the spine at the top that got ripped off when the book got caught in the spokes of my bike.

Like the Player's Handbook and its weapon tables, this book had a complete list of monsters at the end, but

unfortunately there were no pictures or descriptions (what's an Otyugh? All I can tell you is that it has an Armour Class of 2 and has 47 hit points). It also had a list of magic items, which does make one's job as a dungeon master easier because you do not have to go around making up things off the top of your head. However, these days (despite the fact that I don't actually have a roleplaying group at this time because all of my roleplaying friends are back in Adelaide) I am finding that I am using the Dungeon Master's Guide less and less.

I have also noted that in the second and subsequent editions the Dungeon Master's Guide became the thin book and the Player's Handbook became the thick book, but that is maybe because the creators identified that the Player's Handbook is the actual core rule book and the Dungeon Master's Guide is more like a supplement. However, I just remember that the reason that the Dungeon Master's Guide was important was because it contained a lot of stuff that related to combat, which in later editions was shifted over to the Player's Handbook.

What I remember about this book was not just the cover, but also a couple of pictures of naked and demonic people in the back. I remember back in the days when I had made friends with the son of some fundamentalist Pentecostal Christians at school and was staying at their house during exams because my parents had gone to Melbourne. I had introduced Dungeons and Dragons to my friend and his father had decided to look at it and discovered it referenced some books on witchcraft, so to him that was a big bad no-no. However, I cannot forget the look on his face when he opened up the back of the Dungeon Master's Guide to see a picture of a demon girl with her boobie showing. He just stared at it for I reckon at least a minute with this absolutely horrified look on his face.

Look to be honest, I can't really go too hard on the guy because like any loving father he was concerned for his kid and he wanted to make sure that what he got involved in was not too bad, and in particular, he didn't want his son to get involved in witchcraft. However, in all seriousness, not every Dungeons and Dragons players goes off and gets involved in witchcraft and satanism, and in fact, out of all of the Dungeons and Dragons players that I have known, very few actually did end up going down that road (it was usually the Vampire the Masquerade people who do that).

As for this book, there is one thing that I particularly loved about it, and that was the random dungeon creator. One of the things that I loved as a kid was roleplaying, and I wanted to do as much of it as possible, even when my friend wasn't able to do it (and I did find that as a teenager I did struggle to find people who would play it with me), so I ended up resorting to the random dungeon generator. Personally, I preferred mapping the dungeons, and that was why I liked the generator, but unfortunately the maps turned out to be quite chaotic. However, in the days of the old computer roleplaying games, my map making desires were somewhat fulfilled. In fact, I had whole graphbooks full of a multitude of maps that I had made from the many computer games that I had played through.

Oh, by the way, this is an otyugh.

Max says

It's weird reading this book after being more familiar with recent editions of D&D. Some things are what I'd expect from the DMG, and some things are quite different. There's all the details and mechanics of magic items, of course, and most of them are familiar to me from 3.5. The artifact rules were odd, though - there are

some artifacts I've never heard of before, and there's also the fact that the DM is supposed to randomize their properties so players can't read this book and learn the secrets. That's one of the biggest differences, really - the emphasis on the idea that the players shouldn't actually know a lot of the rules. There's a whole spiel early on about how the Dungeon Master should make sure not to let this book fall into the hands of the players, or else it will radically change the game. This, along with things like lots of cursed magic items and other nasty tricks, shows that there's a rather more antagonistic view of DMing in this book than is normal these days. There is some advice about not killing characters who don't deserve it, and being a fair DM, but there's still clearly a major attitude difference on display here. Furthermore, there isn't actually all that much concrete advice on being a Dungeon Master. There's a few bits and pieces sprinkled around, but there's a lot more stuff like rules the players should really have in their book and tons of charts. And I do mean tons. Though they actually seem useful, regardless of edition: stuff like random dungeon dressings, encounter tables for urban adventures, and even a whole system for randomly generating dungeons and wildernesses. I don't know that I plan to run a 1st edition game any time soon, if ever, and I'd certainly want to look over some proper DM advice first, but as a glimpse at the early days of gaming, this is pretty interesting. Plus, Gary Gygax has a pretty fun writing style. It's a little pretentious, but also manages to be friendly, and it's clear he must've been a fun guy to hang out with. Even if I never do more than read this particular edition of Dungeons and Dragons, I'm glad to have taken the time to do so and see what it was like back in the day - and glean a few things to take with me into modern games.

Stuart says

Full disclosure: Never really played AD&D except for a few ill-fated attempts in 5th grade. It's amazing how personalities can clash, especially with an incompetent DM. But it was still pretty cool to read these books.

Mike (the Paladin) says

High five if you date back to this edition of D&D (or AD&D as these books were called). Back in 1978 I "discovered" D&D. I bought the books, got a basic set of dice and pulled a group together. I've played on and off ever since. I still have this book, and a couple of editions that followed, this one has a place in "fond memory" as the first edition (well actually, I did have the little box set, but we moved on to these quickly...like after one gaming session).

I've played PC, and console electronic RPGs since, but table top games are still special.

By the way these are still valuable if you like to set up your own games...also the cartoons are hilarious and the drawings nostalgic.

Jason Koivu says

Many dabbled in D&D, but those who owned the *Dungeon Master's Guide* were addicts.

This was the book that turned this quirky little game with its odd-shaped dice into a full-fledged obsession. Not only did it show you how to play and referee the game, it provided the tools to generate full-on worlds filled with all manner of monsters, tricky traps and tantalizing treasure. New adventure after new adventure could be created via this book with all of its lists, tables, and charts filled with everything the players would

need in the way of fantasy adventuring gear, world-building info on climate, geography, governments, etc...heck there's even more information *after* the glossary and index!

Actually, it's almost too thorough. I think many people were turned off of playing D&D when they saw the size of the chunky rulebooks that came with it. Sure, you could and many did adhere to the rules laid down herein word for word. My cousin did, which added intense boredom to what should've been a fun game. No, I think all the information was provided to help the players along, give them guidance and something to fall back on, not hinder them with fact-researching every time a player searched for a secret door, stabbed a giant jelly or passed wind in a sacred temple. This book helped countless sweaty, pimp-faced teens without an ounce of understanding about the greater world around them seem like omnipotent gods.

Regardless of the fact that there were good Dungeon Masters...

and there were bad DMs...

All of them absolutely *had* to own this book.

John says

Gary Gygax died a couple of days ago, and I was reminded of the many happy hours spent imagining that I had escaped the deserts of Idaho for the strange world described by authors I enjoyed at the time: L. Sprague de Camp, Lin Carter, Fritz Lieber, R. E. Howard, Andre Norton, and many others.

I uncovered this book while clearing out several boxes that were water-damaged. To my surprise, the book is free of mold, showing only the wear of many trips in my backpack.

Though many gamers now object to the rule-based, combat-oriented system that the book describes, at the time it was all one needed - except for dice, paper and pencil - to create a fantasy world with one's friends.

Now I just need to find my old Monster Manual, which contains extended descriptions and drawings of a variety of creatures.

Ken says

A crucial text for any young dweeb's formative development. Roll deep, playa.
